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ENGLISH IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

IN a paper on "Entrance Requirements in English," published in the SCHOOL REVIEW last June, the statement was made that there is in the secondary schools "no recognized course of English beyond the study of the books prescribed for college entrance." As this statement was at the time left unsupported, some facts bearing upon it may not be without interest.

Two or three months ago I sent out letters addressed to the instructors in English in the high schools of the most important cities of the country asking for lists of the English classics read and studied in their schools. The answers to these letters indicate that in no small portion of these high schools no definite course of study has been prescribed, the classics being chosen from year to year to suit the tastes of the individual instructors, and that of those high schools where a definite course has been prescribed no two schools have anything like a similar one.

To illustrate the real extent of this diversity I have selected from all parts of the country a number of schools whose courses of study lend themselves to tabulation. In order to secure a fairly representative list, I have chosen the high schools in sixteen cities having a population of more than 100,000, and in sixteen having a population of less than 100,000. Of the latter, eight have from 50,000 to 100,000, five from 25,000 to 50,000, while the remaining three are university towns having less than 25,000 inhabitants. The cities represented are Allegheny; Ann Arbor, Mich.; Birmingham, Ala.; Boston; Cambridge; Chicago; Cincinnati; Cleveland; Denver; Des Moines; Evanston, Ill.; Evansville, Ind.; Indianapolis; Ithaca, N. Y.; Kansas City; Lincoln; Little Rock, Ark.; Lowell, Mass.; Madison, Wis.; Minneapolis; Newark; New Haven; Pittsburgh; Philadelphia; Portland, Me.; Providence; Saginaw, Mich.; San Francisco; St. Louis; Tacoma, Wash.; Washington; Wichita, Kan. If the number of cities were increased the diversity

would in all probability be even more glaring than it appears from the following tables :

TABLE I.¹

NATIONALITY OF AUTHORS.

American -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
British -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
Foreign (studied in translations)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Whole number of authors studied	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65

TABLE II.

CLASSIFICATION OF WORKS.

POETRY.					PROSE.				
Dramas -	-	-	-	13	Orations -	-	-	-	6
Single poems (not dramas)	49				Novels -	-	-	-	34
Collections of poetry	-	34			Single essays -	-	-	-	21
		—			Collections of essays -				21
		96			Miscellaneous	-	-	-	10
									—
									82
Whole number of works studied	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	178

TABLE III.

The numbers in this table show the relative popularity of the authors named. A count is given for each work studied, and for each time it appears in a new program of study. Authors having less than three counts are not named : Bacon 5, Browning 5, Browning, Mrs., 3, Bryant 20, Burns 18, Burroughs 3, Byron 11, Carlyle 6, Chaucer 15, Cowper 3, Dickens 14, Dryden 4, George Eliot 6, Emerson 16, Franklin 7, Goldsmith 26, Gray 15, Hawthorne 26, Holmes 14, Irving 32, Keats 7, Lamb 9, Lincoln 7, Longfellow 39, Lowell 12, Macaulay 21, Milton 38, Pope 15, Ruskin 3, Scott 68, Shakspeare 76, Shelley 8, Spenser 4, Tennyson 40, Thoreau 3, Washington 4, Webster 19, Whittier 25, Wordsworth 13.

¹ In this and the following tables no work is included which is required for entrance to college in 1898. With a few exceptions, the best high schools have adopted these prescribed classics, although they by no means agree on the places assigned them in the courses of study.

TABLE IV.¹

Author	Name of Work	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
<i>Bacon:</i>	Essays (selected) - - - -			2	3
<i>Browning:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - -			1	4
<i>Browning, E. B.:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - -				3
<i>Bryant:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - -	4	3	4	1
	Thanatopsis - - - -	2	1	4	1
<i>Burns:</i>	Cotter's Saturday Night - - -	1	3	2	1
	Poems (selected) - - - -		4	3	4
<i>Burroughs:</i>	Essays (selected) - - - -	2	1		
<i>Byron:</i>	Childe Harold (parts) - - - -			2	1
	Poems (selected) - - - -			3	1
	Prisoner of Chillon - - - -	1	1	1	1
<i>Carlyle:</i>	Selections - - - -		2	1	3
<i>Chaucer:</i>	Prologue to Canterbury Tales -		1	3	4
	Knight's Tale - - - -		1	3	1
<i>Cowper:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - -			1	2
<i>Dickens:</i>	A Christmas Carol - - - -	3	4		
	The Cricket on the Hearth - - -	2		1	
<i>Dryden:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - -		1	1	2
<i>Eliot:</i>	Silas Marner - - - -		2	2	2
<i>Emerson:</i>	Essays (selected) - - - -		3	4	9
<i>Franklin:</i>	Autobiography - - - -	1	4		1
<i>Goldsmith:</i>	The Deserted Village - - - -	1	7	6	2
	Poems (selected) - - - -		3	5	1
<i>Gray:</i>	Elegy in a Country Churchyard -	2	3	3	2
	Poems (selected) - - - -			3	2
<i>Hawthorne:</i>	Mosses from an Old Manse - -	3	1		
	Tales of the White Hills - - -	4	1		
	Tanglewood Tales - - - -	4			
	Twice-Told Tales - - - -	1	1	1	1
	Wonder Book - - - -	3			
<i>Holmes:</i>	Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table (parts) - - - -		1	1	1
	Poems (selected) - - - -	2	4		
	Prose (selected) - - - -	1	2	1	1
<i>Irving:</i>	Alhambra - - - -	1	1		1
	Sketch-Book (parts) - - - -	22	3	2	1
<i>Keats:</i>	Eve of St. Agnes - - - -	1			2
	Poems (selected) - - - -		1	1	2
<i>Lamb:</i>	Essays (selected) - - - -			2	3
	Tales from Shakspeare - - - -	4			
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Gettysburg Address - - - -	4	2	1	
<i>Longfellow:</i>	Courtship of Miles Standish - -	5	1		2
	Evangeline - - - -	12	1	1	1
	Hiawatha - - - -	1	1		1
	Poems (selected) - - - -	8	2	2	1
<i>Lowell:</i>	Essays (selected) - - - -	1	1	1	1
	Poems (selected) - - - -	2	4	1	1

¹ Works having less than three counts are not included in this table. As in the preceding table, a count is given each time a work appears in a new program of study. The years in which the work is studied are also shown.

Author	Name of work	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
<i>Macaulay:</i>	Essays (selected) - - - -	1		4	11
	Lays of Ancient Rome - - - -	1	4		
<i>Milton:</i>	Comus - - - - -			3	4
	L'Allegro and Il Penseroso - -		1	8	8
	Lycidas - - - - -			3	6
	Poems (selected) - - - - -		2	1	2
<i>Pope:</i>	Essay on Man - - - - -			3	3
	Homer's Odyssey (parts) - - -	1	2		
	Poems (selected) - - - - -		2	2	3
<i>Ruskin:</i>	Prose (selected) - - - - -			1	2
<i>Scott:</i>	Ivanhoe - - - - -	6	3	3	
	Kenilworth - - - - -		2		1
	Lady of the Lake - - - - -	5	12	3	1
	Lay of the Last Minstrel - - -	2			1
	Marmion - - - - -	2	3	4	1
	Quentin Durward - - - - -	1		2	
	Talisman - - - - -	2		2	1
	Woodstock - - - - -		2	2	1
	Poems (selected) - - - - -		1	2	
<i>Shakspeare:</i>	As You Like It - - - - -	1	1	4	1
	Hamlet - - - - -		1	2	6
	Julius Cæsar - - - - -	1	7	11	2
	Lear - - - - -	1	1	1	
	Merchant of Venice - - - - -	5	6	8	5
	Midsummer Night's Dream - -	1		1	3
	Twelfth Night - - - - -	1	1		1
<i>Shelley:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - - -	1	1	2	4
<i>Spenser:</i>	Faërie Queene (parts) - - -				3
<i>Tennyson:</i>	Enoch Arden - - - - -		3	3	
	Idylls of the King - - - - -	3	2	6	
	Poems (selected) - - - - -		4	6	5
<i>Thoreau:</i>	Prose (selected) - - - - -	2			1
<i>Washington:</i>	Farewell Address - - - - -	1	2		
<i>Webster:</i>	First Bunker Hill Oration - -	5	5	4	3
<i>Whittier:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - - -	5	4	1	1
	Snow Bound - - - - -	9	3	1	1
<i>Wordsworth:</i>	Poems (selected) - - - - -	2	2	4	5

These tables have been given mainly to suggest an exhaustive study that might profitably be made of the courses in English in the high schools and academies throughout the United States. Would an examination of the courses in all of these schools justify the following conclusions, which the tables given above seem to warrant?

1. With a few exceptions there is practically no uniformity whatever in the place in the school programs assigned a particular classic. A classic may be studied by first year pupils in one school, while in another it may be studied in the fourth year. A

third school may place the same classic in the second or third year.

2. Very few schools seem to pay much attention to the matter of proportion. Considering the relative worth of American literature as compared with British literature, it is quite evident that too much prominence is being given to the former. The wisdom of giving so much time to the study of fiction may also be doubted.

3. Not to mention other conclusions that will be equally obvious to the reader, it may be added, in closing, that secondary schools are very much in need of practical suggestions from educators, to help in forming better programs for the study of English. The National Educational Association should make it the work of some committee (1) to more definitely formulate the aims to be sought in the teaching of English, not only throughout the whole course of study in the secondary school, but also in each year of that course; (2) to outline a progressive course of study which will consist of the English classics best suited to aid in the attainment of these aims, and (3) to suggest the most effective methods of teaching these classics in each year of the course. It is needless to add that this should be done in such a way as to give the freedom and elasticity always necessary to the best work.

TULEY FRANCIS HUNTINGTON

MILWAUKEE, WIS.